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Official Records

President: Mr. Eliasson

(Sweden)

*The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.***Agenda item 12****Prevention of armed conflict****Report of the Secretary-General (A/60/891)****Draft resolution (A/60/L.61)**

The President. Prevention of armed conflict is a moral imperative. It is a human necessity to save lives and protect civilian populations. It is a political necessity for the credibility of international cooperation, in particular the United Nations. It is also an economic necessity, both for the countries involved and for the international community, because of the enormous costs of war and post-conflict recovery and reconstruction. Early action should be the natural reaction to early warning. Prevention must thus be a moral, political and economic priority for the United Nations and its Member States.

With that in mind, I am particularly grateful for the progress report of the Secretary-General on the prevention of armed conflict. His personal commitment to early action and to preventive diplomacy has been pivotal in creating a culture of prevention in all activities of the Organization. His first comprehensive report on the subject in 2001 is a cornerstone for the Organization's agenda in the field of prevention.

Based on the Secretary-General's 2001 report, the members of the General Assembly, in resolution

57/337, adopted a comprehensive plan of action for the preventive work of the United Nations. The Security Council also adopted resolution 1366 (2001) on its role in the prevention of armed conflict. Those documents form a solid basis for our continued work.

The United Nations has an essential role to play in preventing armed conflict by virtue of its mandate, its legitimacy, its universal membership and its broad-ranging activities and competence. One of its principal tasks under the Charter is the maintenance of international peace and security — in other words, the prevention of war.

Preventive diplomacy must engage all parts of the system, including the specialized agencies, funds, programmes, regional and field offices, and the international financial community. We need also to be in contact with civil society and non-governmental organizations on those issues.

From the review annex to the report of the Secretary-General, it is evident that many of the activities of the United Nations have, directly or indirectly, a conflict prevention dimension. That is most welcome. As pointed out by the Secretary-General, Article 33 of the Charter obligates Member States to seek peaceful settlements of any dispute that may endanger peace and security. Any Member State can, according to Article 35, bring disputes and situations to the attention of the Security Council or the General Assembly. I could not agree more with the Secretary-General when he encourages Member States to make more effective use of such tools for pacific

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settlement of disputes: negotiation, mediation, conciliation and judicial settlement.

On a personal note, I may say that, to me, Article 33 of the United Nations Charter constitutes diplomatic poetry. In it, we have eight methods of preventive diplomacy, which, I regret to say, are rarely used.

Such preventive action should be proportional to the intensity of conflict. If measures such as fact-finding missions and the range of tools under Chapter VI of the Charter do not suffice, further steps — such as deploying peacekeeping missions and actions under Chapters VI and VII — must be considered.

The gist of the Secretary-General's report is the importance of using the full capacity of the United Nations. With the Department of Political Affairs as the focal point, along with the Secretary-General's good offices, effective system-wide coherence is vital, bringing in actors in human rights and political, economic, environmental and social development. Promoting democracy, respect for human rights, protection of refugees and sustainable development worldwide must be part of a comprehensive preventive strategy. We need to work both with the more short-term measures, described as operational prevention, and with long-term, so-called structural prevention, addressing sources of tension and the root causes of the conflict. The Secretary-General points to some crucial issues that we, the international community, need to address, such as natural resources, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, HIV/AIDS, environmental degradation and migration.

I would like to make the linkage here to the reform agenda of the United Nations and the importance of a strengthened United Nations. The United Nations is in a unique position to address those challenges in a comprehensive way. Many of the reforms that Members decided on in the world summit outcome last year, and that the General Assembly implemented during this session, will in fact be important tools in preventing armed conflict. The Peacebuilding Commission has the potential to make a difference to countries emerging from conflict in choosing the way of sustainable development instead of relapsing into conflict, helped also by the international community.

The Human Rights Council is to strengthen the standing of human rights within the United Nations system. The United Nations Charter itself recognizes

the importance of universal respect for human rights and for the creation of conditions of stability and well-being that are necessary for peaceful relations among nations. The new Human Rights Council will contribute, through dialogue and cooperation, towards the prevention of human rights violations and respond promptly to human rights emergencies, as stated in the resolution that the General Assembly adopted on 18 March.

The full realization of the Millennium Development Goals and a committed approach to poverty reduction and sustainable development are prerequisites for the maintenance of peace and security. The world summit outcome reaffirmed the interlinkage between development, peace and security, and human rights. Our leaders made substantial commitments at the world summit in the field of development commitments that were followed up through a resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 30 June.

The world summit outcome welcomed the establishment of the United Nations Democracy Fund. I am encouraged that the Fund has now decided on the financing of the first projects.

I would not end without referring to the importance of the commitments made in the world summit outcome on the responsibility to protect. That was a major achievement on which we must all build. The most important part of that concept is the responsibility to prevent ethnic cleansing, mass killing and genocide, and to supply States with the capacity to protect their own populations. That is a crucial task for the United Nations and for all of us as Member States.

I sincerely hope that the General Assembly will continue to play an active role in preventing armed conflict, in accordance with its role under the Charter. The General Assembly is not only the engine for normative work, but also the highest forum for expressing the common concern and the political will of the international community. I look forward to an active and constructive debate. Since only a few days remain of the sixtieth session, we will, I hope, at the end of this meeting decide to revert to the Secretary-General's report and the recommendations contained therein during the sixty-first session. I have already discussed the importance of that matter with my successor.

I now give the floor to Deputy Secretary-General Mark Malloch Brown, who will introduce the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Progress report on the prevention of armed conflict".

The Deputy Secretary-General: Let me first, if I may, read out a statement from the Secretary-General.

"I very much regret that I cannot be with you today. I was looking forward to this occasion, and I am particularly grateful to President Eliasson for organizing today's debate. As you know, one of my consistent objectives as Secretary-General has been to move the United Nations from a culture of reaction to one of prevention. This, after all, is what is implied by the very first words that our founders used to express their purpose in founding the Organization — 'to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war'.

"In the first year of my tenure, the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, chaired by my dear friend David Hamburg and the late, much lamented Cyrus Vance, inspired us all with its groundbreaking report. Since then, encouraged by the General Assembly and the Security Council, we in the Secretariat have sought to build on the Commission's work. I submitted my first report on the subject in 2001 and an interim one in 2003, and now I am pleased to submit the latest progress report, a main finding of which is that a culture of prevention is indeed beginning to take hold at the United Nations. Indeed, in many parts of the world we are working to resolve disputes peacefully, and we are seeking more and more to build a preventive approach into other aspects of our work, notably those concerned with economic and social development.

"The Deputy Secretary-General will tell you a bit more about the report in his own words. But I hope very much that you will read it for yourselves and that with your help my successor will be able to strengthen this vital aspect of the Organization's work.

"Meanwhile, I trust you will forgive my absence, since the object of my current mission is, precisely, to prevent further armed conflict in a region of the world which, during the lifetime of the United Nations, has suffered from it more

than most. I look forward to hearing the conclusions of your debate on my return."

Now let me, following the remarks of the Secretary-General that I have just read out for him, offer some further comments of my own, as he suggested I would.

I think that perhaps the most striking recommendation of the report comes in paragraph 118, which is the proposal that, were we to dedicate just 2 per cent of the amount that we spend today on peacekeeping, we would with that \$100 million be in a position to buy a lot of prevention. What buys a little peace prospectively has the real possibility of preventing one or more major wars in a year.

Everyone agrees that prevention is better, and also far more economical, than cure. Indeed, the latter point is perhaps even more obvious in the case of armed conflict than in that of disease, given the disastrous economic effects of conflict and the high cost of peacebuilding and reconstruction.

If prevention is so cheap, why are people so reluctant to invest in it? The answer, of course, is that the utility of any given prevention strategy is very difficult to prove. The need for it can always be questioned until it has already failed, and its success is impossible to demonstrate. Wars that do not happen are not news, and it is always possible that they would not have happened anyway, even if there had not been a prevention strategy.

Still, I think members will find, if they take the Secretary-General's to heart and read the report, that there are some pretty persuasive examples. One, mentioned in paragraph 58, is the dispute between Cameroon and Nigeria over the Bakassi peninsula. That is the sort of dispute that has been the trigger, if not the cause, of very serious conflicts in other parts of Africa and the world, but in this case the Secretary-General was able to use his good offices, bringing the Presidents of the two countries together for a series of meetings, to facilitate an agreement on how to implement the decision of the International Court of Justice, partly by setting up a Mixed Commission to identify and promote cross-border cooperation projects and joint economic ventures.

Another example is given in paragraph 56. Last year, the United Nations, working closely with other Member States and regional organizations, helped the

Government of Ecuador to defuse a political crisis by renewing the country's democratic institutions and building up the independence of State authorities, specifically the Supreme Court.

A third example has come to fruition since the report went to press. In Guyana, the Department of Political Affairs and the United Nations Development Programme have been working together to help the people of the country to overcome long-standing social and political tensions. I hope that may have contributed in small part to last week's peaceful elections in that country.

Sadly, it is much easier to cite cases in which conflict was not prevented, but surely could have been if — and that is always a big “if” — the national authorities at the time had been willing to listen to advice. Too often, we spend vast sums of money to fight fires that, in hindsight, we might more easily have extinguished with timely preventive action. In Côte d'Ivoire, for example, we are now in the throes of an almost impossible peacekeeping and peacemaking mission in a deeply divided country with a broken economy. That disaster could surely have been avoided if previous Ivorian Governments had been able to integrate, rather than exclude the workers of foreign origin who were contributing to the rapid economic growth of that time.

On the other hand, that example — the integration of migrant workers — also shows the challenge we face, because many of the allegedly most tried and true approaches to integration have, in Europe and elsewhere, been found wanting.

And so I come to what is perhaps most difficult about the area of prevention, and on which we look forward to the deliberations in the General Assembly of Governments and, tomorrow, of civil society representatives: advice on next steps.

Prevention remains an area of much promise but fewer answers. Therein lies the United Nations essential role: codifying, testing, promoting best practice, using our neutrality to build bridges and find new ways forwards, and doing so based on the collective wisdom of those here today and those we will hear from tomorrow.

The President: I am very glad to tell you, Mr. Deputy Secretary-General, that Mr. David Hamburg, whom you have mentioned, is in the Hall today. His work as Co-Chair, together with the late

Cyrus Vance, of the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict was seminal and of great importance for the direction of this debate. We are very glad to have him here, at the side of our friend Ibrahim Gambari, who carries the torch inside the United Nations on this matter.

I am glad the Deputy Secretary-General touched on some of the basic issues. What a qualitative difference we could have in the United Nations if we moved the focus from the late stages of conflict to its early stages, if we were to spend more time on smoke detection rather than taking care of a house that has already burned down.

The Deputy Secretary-General, with his background in the media world, knows how much effect the television cameras have. Sometimes, when I was Emergency Relief Coordinator, I asked myself slightly bitterly whether conflict existed if there were no pictures of it, and what happened when the cameras disappeared. Has anyone ever seen the headline in a newspaper: “A disaster did not occur”? Prevention is not rewarded to the extent needed. I am glad the Deputy Secretary-General put that issue clearly in front of us.

I have a list of 17 speakers, and there is another item on the agenda, from Azerbaijan and Armenia. I give the floor to the representative of Finland.

Ms. Lintonen (Finland): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The acceding countries Bulgaria and Romania, the candidate countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia, and the EFTA country Iceland, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, align themselves with this declaration.

The European Union warmly welcomes the Secretary-General's progress report on the prevention of armed conflict (A/60/891). As the report underlines, one of the chief obligations set forth in the Charter of the United Nations is the prevention of conflict. A clear message of the report is the progress of United Nations work towards a culture of prevention. The EU is pleased to note the strengthening of a culture of prevention across the Organization and vigorously supports the continuation of this trend. We understand

that, in order to further promote prevention of armed conflicts and their recurrence, the Member States of the United Nations should focus resources on strengthening the Organization's preventive mechanisms.

The European Union acknowledges the reported positive trend of the United Nations as regards increasing emphasis on prevention. We find the 2005 World Summit Outcome (resolution 60/1) a very significant event, in which Member States reiterated their commitment to promote the culture of prevention of armed conflicts by effectively addressing the interconnected security and development challenges faced by peoples throughout the world, as well as to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations to address the root causes of conflict in all possible ways. Reforms enhancing prevention include, *inter alia*, the newly established United Nations Human Rights Council and the Peacebuilding Commission. The Peacebuilding Commission's role in conflict prevention is potentially very valuable in supporting countries in post-conflict situation on the road towards sustainable peace and development and thus in helping to prevent the risk of the countries relapsing into conflict.

We believe that understanding the root causes of armed conflicts is the basis of conflict prevention. As rightly pointed out in the report of the Secretary-General, we must both understand the origins of conflicts and seek to make violence a less reasonable option. Furthermore, in our preventive efforts we should not forget the underlying injustices and motivations that may have caused the conflict.

Understanding the link between development and security is clearly central to the discussion of preventing conflicts. By "security" we mean not only the lack of conflicts or physical violence, but also issues related to everyday life and basic needs. Fundamental things such as food security, health services, education, environmental security and legal possibilities to act on one's own behalf and to participate in decision-making are at the very core of the concept of human security.

Poverty is a root cause of insecurity and may lead to instability and conflict. We fully support the emphasis in the report stating that implementation of the Millennium Development Goals would serve to

significantly reduce the overall sources of tension for developing countries that are vulnerable to conflict.

The international normative and institutional framework plays a key role in the prevention of armed conflicts. However, we should remember that it is not enough to establish international human rights, humanitarian and other relevant legal instruments. They also need to be understood and implemented fully and effectively. The report commends the work done in sensitizing different actors to the need to understand and apply these laws and rules. We find this kind of capacity-building highly valuable, and we have made it a regular part of the training of the military and civil components of the EU crisis management personnel.

The European Union is strongly committed to supporting the work of the International Criminal Court. The Court constitutes an important and credible preventive mechanism, as would-be perpetrators of human rights violations and war crimes must take into account the possibility of punishment following their actions.

In addition to approaches at the global level, we should emphasize regional initiatives to support the prevention of armed conflict.

The report explicitly underlines the primary responsibility of national Governments for the prevention of conflicts. We fully support this point of view. In this context, the EU reiterates its support for the Summit Outcome conclusion that each State has the responsibility to protect its population from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. The central responsibility rests within the countries themselves, and no external efforts as regards prevention will be of use unless the State and its population agree on their importance and have a will to address the issues in question.

Bad governance, corruption and lack or inadequate functioning of rule-of-law institutions are examples of problems that can lead to instability and conflict. Whereas the strengthening of national capacities to redress the problems is the duty of States, external actors can assist States to mitigate those potentially destabilizing factors by conflict-sensitive development assistance and promotion of good governance and human rights.

Furthermore, civil society is an important actor in preventing armed conflicts and their recurrence.

Governments should find ways to cooperate with non-governmental organizations, academics, religious leaders and other representatives of civil society in order to thoroughly understand and tackle injustices and underlying motivations causing instability and threats of conflict in a society.

The European Union highlights the effective implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security and underscores the importance of integrating a gender perspective into conflict prevention.

Children are a particularly vulnerable group in armed conflicts. The EU shares the concerns raised in the Secretary-General's report in this regard and stresses the importance of addressing the rights and protection of children in strategies for handling armed conflicts. The EU stresses the importance of the United Nations and its Secretary-General in the field of the prevention of conflicts. The Organization has a remarkable record in peacebuilding operations. It also has more competencies to promote conflict prevention than other organizations. The Secretary-General has himself many times successfully provided indispensable mediation in situations that risked escalating into conflict.

However, as the Secretary-General fairly states in his report, there are number of gaps in the United Nations system that are hampering work in the area of conflict prevention. We warmly welcome the efforts to strengthen coordination and coherence within the United Nations system, as well as those to enhance cooperation between the United Nations and other international organizations and relevant actors. There has been great progress in recent years in the area of tangible cooperation between the United Nations and the EU in crisis management areas. The EU recalls in particular the joint declaration on United Nations-European Union cooperation in the field of crisis management, which was signed in New York in September 2003. Further steps could be taken to enhance that cooperation.

In conclusion, we find the report's comprehensive approach to the prevention of conflict highly supportable. Preventing conflicts more effectively requires a better and more thorough understanding of the origins of conflicts. It also requires addressing the root causes of tension. The challenge is to ensure that due importance, including in terms of resources, is

given to long-term conflict prevention activities rather than to responding to short-term crises. We should seek to enhance cooperation and coherence in our actions at all levels — from the global level to enhanced national capacities for the peaceful resolution of conflicts, and engaging civil society actors — in order to promote conflict prevention and support peace.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me to begin by expressing our sincere gratitude to the Secretary-General for the clear vision reflected in his report on the prevention of armed conflict and on strengthening the work of international institutions in the area of peacebuilding (A/60/891). I would also like to express our sincere appreciation for the efforts by the Department of Political Affairs in preparing the report, which is to serve as one of the pillars to be relied upon in the endeavour to develop a clearer perspective regarding enhancing the capacity of the Organization to prevent the development of armed conflicts.

There is no doubt that the prevention of armed conflict continues to be one of the most important issues. It should receive great attention from the General Assembly and the Secretary-General so that it can be addressed as effectively as possible. That should take place in full respect for the Charter and while ensuring the required balance between the roles of each of the principal organs of the Organization in achieving the goals to which we aspire. That requires achieving widespread agreement in the General Assembly so that the United Nations can carry out its preventive role through the use of diplomacy. That proposal was put forth in 1995 by former Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in his *Agenda for Peace*.

In that regard, we agree with the report that the starting point should be to address the underlying causes of armed conflict at the early stages, thereby providing a real opportunity to prevent the development of such conflict. There are many issues at the national and international levels that require us to make greater efforts at the United Nations. In particular, those areas include the lack of sustainable development, the need to eliminate injustice, growing feelings of anxiety and desperation resulting from the failure to respect international law and the Charter of the United Nations, the lack of sufficient efforts by the United Nations to end the forceful occupation of foreign territory, and preventing discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, religion or other grounds.

We note that the report refers to the illicit trade in natural resources, the spread of HIV/AIDS and trafficking in illegal drugs as factors in armed conflicts. However, the report fails to mention foreign occupation as a source of armed conflict, although that issue was dealt with in resolution 57/337, which was the basis for the report. Paragraph 10 of the resolution clearly emphasizes the need to end foreign occupation as one of the important issues that must be addressed in the context of preventing conflict. Any future effort involving this or other reports should therefore take into account this crucial element in a way that leads to ending occupation.

History continues to prove that the source of violence in the Middle East region is Israel's continuing occupation of Palestinian territory, the Shab'a farms and the Golan Heights. Had it not been for such occupation we would not have experienced armed conflict in the region. Full withdrawal from Arab territories is the sole way to end resistance and limit armed conflict. That was the reason for the Arab League's launch of the initiative calling for strengthening the political track at the United Nations dealing with the Arab-Israeli conflict, so as to achieve lasting and just peace as soon as possible. On the basis of the Arab initiative endorsed at the 2002 Beirut summit, the Arab States will continue to hold the United Nations — in particular the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Secretary-General — responsible for the implementation of the peace process, along with the relevant parties and in the timeframe specified.

The report addresses the absence of a clear strategy to prevent the use of nuclear, radiological, chemical and biological weapons, the failure to reach agreement at the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the 2005 World Summit Outcome, and the change in the position of nuclear States resulting from the change in security concepts. All these issues require further study and work to minimize the chances of armed conflict and to prevent the NPT from collapsing.

The report welcomes Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), but it does not deal with strengthening the United Nations, especially the General Assembly, to deal with disarmament issues in addition to non-proliferation issues. In that connection, it is important to recall that the base on which the NPT was

established is the obligation of nuclear-weapon States to eliminate their nuclear arsenals and that of non-nuclear weapon States not to produce them. Despite changes in military doctrine, that provision remains the base. If it is not respected, we will face the danger of the collapse of the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

Against that backdrop, we must conclude today with a clear message that nuclear-weapon States have major responsibilities under the Treaty. Those responsibilities were reiterated in the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference. Nuclear-weapon States also have a responsibility to work towards the universality of the Treaty. That will not be achieved by convincing States outside the Treaty that have acquired nuclear weapons to become parties to the Treaty, but by establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East and a zone free of weapons of mass destruction. That will require all States in the region to adhere to the Treaty as non-nuclear-weapon States.

In order to succeed in efforts to limit the outbreak of armed conflict, a clearer approach is required concerning the mandates of the main organs of the United Nations. That approach, which should aim at ending the Security Council's encroachment upon the General Assembly's mandate, calls for a distinction to be made between prevention and the peaceful settlement of disputes once they arise, on the one hand, and, on the other, the enforcement measures taken by the Security Council as a last measure to deal with conflicts once they erupt. It also requires assessing the value of the debates that take place in the Security Council — including those on women and armed conflict and children and armed conflict, which have been discussed at times when the Council seemed incapable of taking any action to put an end to the hostilities in Lebanon. We should have a vision for carrying out the concepts debated in the Council on the basis that the Assembly, as the main democratic body of the Organization, should address conflict situations in cases where the Council has, for whatever reason, failed to deal with them.

In that context, we should also consider an adequate way to assign the Secretary-General responsibilities in the area of preventive diplomacy to avoid the development of armed conflicts. That should include mediation and good offices, which should be considered as a main pillar complementing the efforts of the General Assembly.

We should also deal clearly with attempts to mix the global initiative against terrorism and the peaceful settlement of disputes and ending situations of occupation. That also entails not using sanctions before the outbreak of conflict and where there is no Security Council mandate in that matter. That also requires us to stand firm before attempts to create a role for sanctions committees in dealing with terrorism at a time when we have not yet agreed on a comprehensive convention or strategy to combat terrorism. We do not see any reason to confuse the preventive role of the United Nations with terrorism, as they are both absolutely different from one another.

Although we very much believe that respect for human rights and the spread of democracy are inherent parts of the effort to prevent the development of armed conflict, we nevertheless maintain that, in dealing with human rights, the cultural, religious and ethnic specificities that distinguish one region from another should be taken into account. Their basis should be democracy and good governance, both internally and in relations between countries and in international organizations.

There is no doubt that regional organizations can play an important role in the prevention of armed conflict, given their understanding of geographical complexities and their awareness of the best ways to prevent conflicts before they break out. The General Assembly and the Secretary-General should seek to draw the best advantage from those capacities, especially in the areas of early warning and an effective approach to conflict prevention. Effective cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations could help them attain their common goals through the General Assembly. In that connection, we support the allocation to the Assembly of 2 per cent of the annual peacekeeping budget, to enhance and intensify such cooperation and other activities in this field.

It is time for the General Assembly to study the possibility of establishing a new commission, similar to the Peacebuilding Commission, to be called the Commission on the Prevention of Armed Conflict. It would have a new mandate and its own mechanisms. It would focus on coordinating with the Secretary-General on issues relating to the prevention of armed conflict and strengthening the powers of both the General Assembly and the Secretary-General to deal with disputes before they escalate into armed conflict.

Mrs. Ferrari (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines)

As a small, peace-loving State situated in the Caribbean zone of peace and security, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines wishes to make some brief remarks on agenda item 12, entitled "Prevention of armed conflict".

We welcome the report of the Secretary-General (A/60/891), which contains some useful lessons and valuable insights and recommendations from the perspective of the United Nations and a wide range of actors working on the prevention of armed conflict.

One of the core principles of the United Nations, as set out in Article 1 of the Charter, is the maintenance of peace and security — which, obviously, includes the prevention of armed conflict. Chapter VI of the Charter, entitled "Pacific Settlement of Disputes", encourages any Member State to bring any dispute to the attention of the Security Council or the General Assembly.

Those founding principles place a duty on the United Nations to maintain regional peace and security the world over. My delegation wishes to bring to the attention of the General Assembly a simmering dispute between the People's Republic of China and Taiwan that, in our view, poses a significant danger to international peace and security. The sobering facts are as follows.

In March 2004, the National Congress of the People's Republic of China enacted legislation — the so-called anti-secession law — that sought to legalize and legitimize military force to settle the dispute between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait. Article 8 of the law states, *inter alia*, that

"in the event that the Taiwan independence secessionist forces should act under any name or by any means to cause the fact of Taiwan's secession from China, or that major incidents entailing Taiwan's secession from China should occur, or that possibilities for a peaceful reunification should be completely exhausted, the State shall employ non-peaceful means and other necessary measures to protect China's sovereignty and territorial integrity."

That law not only violates the United Nations Charter's principle of the peaceful resolution of disputes, but also threatens the security of the 23 million people of Taiwan. In addition to passing laws

aimed at legalizing armed aggression and continuing to build up its military might, senior officials in the Chinese Government and the People's Liberation Army have increased their threatening and bellicose rhetoric.

The annual report to Congress on the military power of the People Republic of China by the United States Department of Defense in July 2005 contained the following statement on pages 4 and 5:

"China has deployed some 650 to 730 mobile CSS-6 and CSS-7 short-range ballistic missiles to garrisons opposite Taiwan. Deployment of these systems is increasing at a rate of about 100 missiles per year. ... China has 375,000 ground forces personnel deployed to the three military regions opposite Taiwan. China has been upgrading these units with amphibious armor and other vehicles, such as tanks and armored personnel carriers."

The People's Republic of China is a permanent member of the Security Council, the United Nations organ upon which the Charter confers the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. As such it is important for China not to act in a way that is inconsistent with the grave responsibilities placed on members of the Council.

In the opinion of my Government, it is essential for the United Nations to treat this matter seriously and to take the necessary measures to prevent itself from being seen as acquiescing to, or even approving, this conduct by the People's Republic of China, which clearly violates the Charter of the United Nations.

In the recent past, the Security Council has been guilty of inaction when there were clear and obvious threats to humanity. It is our sincere hope that its unwillingness to become engaged in this case does not lead to armed conflict and ultimate tragedy for the people of the region.

It is incumbent upon the Member States of the United Nations to use imagination and diplomacy, and to be the catalysts that promote constructive dialogue and friendly engagement so that the Taiwan situation can be resolved in a peaceful, just and equitable way, to the benefit of the entire region.

The Government and people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines have great admiration for the Chinese civilization on both sides of the Taiwan Strait. It is our fervent hope that this matter can be settled quickly and

peacefully, to the mutual benefit and satisfaction of both parties and in a way that will ensure the lasting peace and security of the region now and in the future.

Mr. Obando (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): Peru would like to express its appreciation to the Secretary-General for the second report on the prevention of armed conflict (A/60/891). We feel this is a very important issue for the international community, for four reasons.

First, it is intrinsic to one of the central elements of the Organization: international peace and security. Second, it means that the United Nations can continue to strengthen its emphasis on this issue, which requires the coordination of various approaches based on security, development and the defence of human rights. Third, this issue allows us to tackle in greater depth not only the responsibility to protect, but also one of its components: the responsibility to prevent. Fourth, examining this issue will help us to avoid the death of millions of people and the generation on a large scale of vulnerable populations such as displaced persons, refugees, the disabled, sexually exploited women and children, child soldiers and, in the long run, more poor people, who are those who suffer most from the consequences of conflict.

With that background, I will concentrate on four themes: first, the usefulness of a systemic approach in the analysis of prevention; second, the importance of a socio-economic dimension in conflict prevention; third, Peru's position with regard to preventive mechanisms that should be adopted by various actors in the international community; and fourth, conflict and the degradation of the environment.

With regard to the first point, Peru is happy to see that the Secretary-General, in his latest report, is using the same systemic approach to the prevention of conflict. In our opinion, that reflects reality in a context of increasing globalization, and it allows one to stress the great weight and international dimension of armed conflict. In other words, it means a comprehensive approach to transnational issues such as governance, unequal distribution of wealth, availability of food, et cetera.

On the second point, there is a multiplicity of factors linked to prevention. The socio-economic variable is usually the principal cause of most conflicts; therefore that is the one to which we need to devote more attention. That it is a cause has been

demonstrated in numerous studies on recent conflicts. In general, the other variables emerge and become significant only when the economic dimension has experienced some serious repercussion. Thus there are ethnically heterogeneous societies that can live peacefully in an economic equilibrium, but those differences can become evident and grow to the point that they create conditions that will provoke conflict when the people of a country or countries cannot satisfy their basic needs. However, it is also possible to find homogeneous societies involved in violent conflict because of poverty or social exclusion.

In other words, when one finds extreme poverty and a collapsed economic system, ethnic, religious or other types of differences could become acute and be transformed into banners for violence — even though they may not be the root origins of conflict. The same happens when a State cannot provide its people with minimal, basic public services in education, health, security, infrastructure, full control of its territory or adequate administration of its natural resources, or when the State cannot pay its public servants, the police or the army in particular. From that point of view, as the World Bank has observed, countries that are at the lowest level of human development are those that are chiefly exposed to conflict.

Thirdly, I wish to refer to preventive mechanisms that should be adopted by the various actors of the international community. In spite of the efforts made to implement peacekeeping operations, in all cases we need to decide on strategies that are more comprehensive, strategies that would include — apart from the institutional reconstruction that would be the foundation for governance and later for holding elections — measures that seek stability and long-term economic sustainability. In that way the Organization will be paying more attention to the causes of conflict than to the symptoms and will be more forward-looking than reactionary.

We consider that the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission is a very appropriate step in attending to the needs of the population of the countries most affected by armed violence, although Peru would have preferred that it also had a truly farsighted approach. However, it is not sufficient. We urgently need more aggressive mechanisms, such as writing off, totally or partially, some of the foreign debt, the provision of tariff concessions or para-tariff concessions, events that will attract foreign investment,

training for young people, greater transfer of technology and the affirmation on the part of international financial agencies to improve public services and infrastructure.

Although it is not part of the Organization, the example of the Global Compact for Afghanistan, which was drawn up successfully, is an example of a more comprehensive strategy that we should think about. As we know, within that framework the international community — with the participation of States, international cooperation organizations and civil society — is providing predictable resources within certain specific time periods in order to carry out objectives, decided in accordance with national priorities, to improve the domestic economy and involve the global economy through the export of goods and services with greater aggregate value. It must be pointed out that private enterprise must seriously commit itself to participate in the process of reconstruction.

That approach should not simply replicate the primary economy but seek to create a new, modern and competitive economy. It should be followed by the international financial institutions that so far have concentrated more on economic adjustment rather than on modernizing dysfunctional, backward economies so that they can compete in the global economy.

What has been discussed is just the principal component of a comprehensive task to effectively prevent armed conflicts. In addition, preventive diplomacy, mediation and other forms of peaceful dispute settlement must be supported. Likewise, in accordance with a given context, we need to implement measures to strengthen the political institutions and tackle the humanitarian problem and the trade in small arms and light weapons, among other considerations. We ought to make more effective the mechanisms for political dialogue, the development and implementation of a comprehensive strategy for peace education, promotion of the rule of law and human rights, strengthening State institutions and the reform of the security sector. Peru is convinced that participation and leadership of the authorities and civil society of each country are necessary, as is the participation of regional organizations.

We should add the importance of the United Nations taking a more comprehensive, prevention-based approach — through an early warning system for

conflicts and focusing on the root causes — that would enable the Organization to urgently design a comprehensive strategy for conflict prevention. We also need to discuss mechanisms to overcome the short attention span of the public and the communications media with regard to conflicts, mechanisms that would attract more action on the part of the various international actors with regard to prevention.

United Nations bodies tend to pay attention to conflicts only when they have already become a reality; only then do they set in motion the multilateral mechanisms set out in Chapter VI of the Charter. That is why it is imperative that the early warning system just mentioned should provoke an immediate response in the Organization, in order to implement the powers in Chapter VI or, depending on the occasion, to establish closer cooperation with regional arrangements, as established in Chapter VIII of the Charter.

As the fourth and last point, I refer to scenarios that enable us to discern potential causes of conflict. One is the degradation of the environment, which has increased the destructive potential of natural disasters and has, in some cases, unleashed them. The issue of scarce resources such as water must also be considered.

Peru is an extremely diverse country with a geography that goes from the sea to the semiarid coast to the Andes and the Amazon basin. We are very concerned at this prognosis, which is based on studies that need to be further researched and deepened, rather than hidden and distorted. The report of the high-level panel of 2004 referred to environmental degradation and the destructive effects of disasters as a threat to global security. Therefore we should continue to implement a strategic and shared vision of sustainable development in which its three dimensions — economic, social and environmental — are adequately considered.

Finally, as one of the components of a larger process, Peru would like to suggest progressive consolidation of a data base administered by the United Nations, through which the Organization, regional organizations, States, local governments and civil society can share with the international community their successful experiences in strengthening institutions and programmes for local development within the framework of the prevention of armed conflict.

Mr. Skinner-Kléé (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*). We wish to thank the Secretary-General for his report contained in document A/60/891 on the prevention of armed conflicts. We are convinced of the need to strengthen the collective capacity of the United Nations for the prevention and resolution of conflicts.

We have taken note of the relevant recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General, which we will examine to discuss and consider during the upcoming session. Nevertheless, we would not want to conclude the sixtieth session by giving the impression that the lack of discussion in the General Assembly indicates that we are indifferent to the matter. On the contrary, through this brief statement we wish to affirm that Guatemala, as a post-conflict country, is mindful of the importance of promoting a culture of peace, and for that reason we highlight the urgent need for mechanisms to prevent conflicts. Furthermore, we stress that we have great experience in this area that has helped us to shape our multifaceted peace process.

If there is one thing we have learned through dialogue and the exchange of experiences, it is that the reduction of risk and preventive attention to conflicts and breaches of the peace are the best way of mitigating, if not avoiding, irreparable and irreversible damage. Although we have made significant progress, Guatemalan society, 10 years after the signing of the peace accords, is still not totally reconciled. We still need to lay the foundations of a more participatory and equitable society, create development opportunities for all, and rebuild the social fabric of our country. We have therefore embarked on a complex process of acknowledging the responsibilities of all the parties to the conflict, initiated reparation and retribution systems, and allowed for the elucidation of the truth of past occurrences, all with the view to opening a window of opportunity for economic growth and sustainable development within the framework of a multicultural society based on a democratic and inclusive system.

We believe that the culture of prevention is consistent with Article 1 of the United Nations Charter, which is of a preventive nature insofar as it calls in its first paragraph for effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for bringing about by peaceful means the settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace.

With all due respect, Sir, we would argue with your characterization of Article 33 of the Charter as poetry. On the contrary, many conflicts have been prevented or disrupted precisely by means of the tools prescribed therein, a fact that is rarely acknowledged.

We also believe that the subject of conflict prevention must be approached from the perspective of the full safeguard of the rule of law, a concept that is key to the legitimacy of every democratic State that guarantees and respects the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all persons. In that sense, we emphasize the importance in all conflict prevention of promoting dialogue mechanisms with all stakeholders. We also acknowledge the valuable contributions of civil society, religions and the private sector. In Guatemala, the experience of holding open dialogues has already borne much fruit, the latest of which is a national agreement on a rural development policy. In that regard, the selection of themes for the holding of such dialogues is essential. We feel that it is a prerogative of each society to safeguard the right to establish its own priorities and identify its particular needs, reflecting its natural and intrinsic uniqueness.

We agree that it is important to act with determination and resolution in our efforts to strengthen the preventive capacities of the Organization, while ensuring that our activities are consistent with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

We encourage the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to pursue its valuable work in conflict prevention, and stress the importance of cooperation among the various bodies of the United Nations system, in particular through the joint programme of the UNDP and the Department of Political Affairs on building countries' institutional and individual capacities in conflict settlement, from which Guatemala and other countries of our region have benefited. Such cooperation has proven useful and effective for Member States.

Finally, allow me to take advantage of what will very probably be my delegation's last opportunity to thank you personally and publicly, Sir, for the magnificent effort you have put into our work this session, which we are now preparing to conclude. We will remember your dedication, commitment and strength, as well those of your staff. We are also

grateful for your efforts at this important session that gave rise to the Peacebuilding Commission and to the Human Rights Council, both valuable instruments at the service of humanity.

The President: If we have had successes, it is because of teamwork. We are in this together. The word "together" is much more powerful than the word "alone".

Mr. Grey-Johnson (Gambia): First, let me congratulate the Secretary-General on his comprehensive and most instructive report on progress made by the United Nations in the prevention of armed conflict. My delegation concurs with the analysis of the factors that give rise to conflict and with the responses required to identify and contain them. Of course, conflict prevention is the *raison d'être* of the Organization, and at the centre of our mandate is the promotion of non-violent ways of resolving them. Alas, although we have come some way in strengthening our capacity to prevent conflicts before they erupt, we still have to "move from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention", as the report so rightly states. From our experiences in Africa, we know that if the United Nations steps early into the fray, there is always a very good chance for a speedy resolution.

We support the view that it should be the responsibility of the United Nations to intervene to prevent the eruption of conflicts, regardless of whether they are within or between States. In many parts of Africa, the conditions of poverty and deprivation are so dire as to constitute obvious triggers of violent civil unrest. Negligent, unresponsive Governments, for which the development account is marginal in their scale of priorities, should be accosted in the same manner as those that openly threaten their neighbours militarily. Development policies — or rather their lack — that have the potential to provoke violent upheavals are as dangerous to global peace as are policies that amount to warmongering.

We in Africa have witnessed the many instances when feelings of hopelessness, marginalization and despair have induced thousands of young, mostly unemployed men and women to take up arms against established authority. The devastation that has ensued in each and every case has been enormous in economic, social and humanitarian terms. The United Nations must develop its capacity to engage Governments that are seen to be unresponsive to the

development needs of their people or whose policies lead to the impoverishment and destitution of their people. We do agree that implementing the Millennium Development Goals would go a long way towards removing the socio-economic triggers of conflict in African countries. We support the United Nations/World Bank Youth Employment Network and hope that it will not turn out to be another empty talk shop. Creating employment opportunities for Africa's youth is a very urgent conflict prevention requirement. We therefore look to the Network for early results.

Tensions between States that emanate from prejudice and misunderstanding between civilizations need our urgent attention, especially with the present occurrences in today's world. My delegation agrees that the United Nations should do more to help reduce those tensions and to promote dialogue and understanding between the world's civilizations. The problems in the Middle East and Afghanistan, as well as the growing phenomenon of terrorism, all attest to the need for the international system to take up that mantle with great urgency. In that regard, the work of bodies such as the Alliance of Civilizations is highly commendable.

We note with regret that, in spite of the tremendous will on the part of the Secretariat to do more, resource constraints are limiting our ability to undertake more conflict-prevention activities. We are more willing to engage in very costly firefighting than in relatively inexpensive fire prevention. We therefore strongly support the Secretary-General in his call for at least 2 per cent of the annual peacekeeping budget to be allocated to prevention activities on a predictable and secure basis.

I cannot in good conscience conclude this statement without referring to a very serious omission in the report: the deteriorating security situation across the Taiwan Strait. It is unfortunate that none other than the People's Republic of China, a respected member of the Security Council — which is the custodian of international peace and security — is itself threatening international peace and security by expanding its already huge military arsenal in readiness for an invasion of Taiwan. Every year for the past several years, China has trained about 100 additional missiles on Taiwan, reaching a total of 800 missiles this year. China's military budget has been growing at double-digit rates every year for the past 10 years. And China has openly stated that it is prepared to settle the Taiwan

question through "non-peaceful means and other necessary measures". Not only has Taiwan been openly threatened, but so have important Members of the Organization.

Many expert reviews of the situation in the Taiwan Strait have concluded that it is perhaps the world's most dangerous threat to international peace and security. Last year, James Hoge, Editor of the journal *Foreign Affairs*, observed that

"the flashpoints for hostilities — Taiwan, the Korean peninsula and divided Kashmir — have defied peaceful resolution. Any of them could explode into large-scale warfare that would make the current Middle East confrontations seem like police operations."

Last year, tensions escalated further when China passed its anti-secession law, which virtually declared war on Taiwan. Taiwan reacted by terminating the functioning of the National Unification Council and the application of the National Unification Guidelines. The situation has since continued to deteriorate further. It is becoming more and more serious and calls for our urgent attention.

Some may argue that the issue of the Taiwan Strait is an internal matter for China to resolve. Others view it as a situation involving two sovereign States. Whatever the case, it is a matter that falls squarely within the mandate of the Security Council and should be treated as such. After all, we have rightly responded in the cases of Darfur, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other internal-conflict situations, whether active or latent.

My delegation therefore strongly urges the Secretary-General to undertake the necessary operational and other actions, in accordance with Article 33 of Chapter VI of the Charter, to begin a process of mediation between the two parties and to report to the General Assembly at our next session on progress made.

Mr. Baum (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Switzerland welcomes the report on the prevention of armed conflict presented to us today (A/60/891). It provides a clear and structured account of preventive measures, as well as a comprehensive inventory of what the United Nations is doing in this area.

It is encouraging to note that the expertise of the Organization in the various areas relating to conflict

prevention has improved in recent years and that its activities have intensified. However, the review of the capacity of the United Nations system in the area of conflict prevention shows that the various actions undertaken could be better coordinated. The specific contribution of each stakeholder to those efforts should be recognized with a view to enhancing coherence and eliminating any duplication within the United Nations system.

An examination of all ongoing conflicts in the world shows that international efforts to prevent conflict, and the capacity of the United Nations in this area, must be reinforced. When post-conflict situations have reignited after years of ceasefire, as has occurred recently in a number of countries, prevention has clearly been shown to be deficient.

Thus far, our debates have focused too much on the cessation of hostilities and not enough on the internal and external factors that contribute to the outbreak of conflict — to say nothing of the human suffering and social, economic and environmental consequences of conflict. However, it is acknowledged that investing in prevention is, generally speaking, more effective and beneficial.

The report is therefore timely. We welcome the fact that there will be a debate — which we hope will be constructive — on conflict prevention during the sixty-first session of the General Assembly. That debate should make it possible to further strengthen the commitment of the United Nations and the international community in this field, which is central to the Charter.

It is very important that civil society participate fully in this debate. We must not underestimate the role and responsibilities of representatives of civil society, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, academic research and the media in that area.

Conflict prevention is a priority of our foreign policy. I can assure you, Mr. President, that Switzerland will play an active and substantial part in the forthcoming debate. We are ready to continue the discussion, together with States that share the same vision, by making concrete proposals to ensure that the recommendations of the Secretary-General are implemented.

Mr. Sopoaga (Tuvalu): The delegation of Tuvalu wishes first of all to thank you, Mr. President, for the

opportunity to contribute to this important discussion on agenda item 12, "Prevention of armed conflict". We wish to commend the Secretary-General and the Secretariat for the very informative and instructive progress report on the prevention of armed conflict (A/60/891). We welcome the findings and recommendations of the report, particularly with regard to building a culture of prevention of armed conflict.

A primary function of the United Nations enshrined in Article 1 of the Charter is to maintain international peace and security and to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to peace and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace.

In particular for small, peaceful and far-flung States such as Tuvalu and for isolated regions such as the Pacific, such a role is crucial, as we all know that international political stability is fundamental to the sustainable development and survival of all States, but in particular small States. The devastation and losses that we have seen resulting from armed conflict in all regions of the world have once again underscored the significant importance of such a role. More important, they require effective prevention measures that are comprehensive and realistic in all regions of the world.

It has to be acknowledged that since its founding, as clearly reflected in the report of the Secretary-General, the United Nations, through the General Assembly and the Security Council, has successfully prevented or resolved several deadly conflicts in the world. For that, it is to be highly commended. It must also be noted that, despite those achievements, the current and looming tensions in East Asia — fuelled in particular by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction on the Korean peninsula and by the threat of the use of military force in the Taiwan Strait — are a real threat to the stability and security not only of the region, but also of the rest of the world.

My delegation strongly feels that the international community must not turn a blind eye to these tensions. The recent swift action of the Security Council with regard to the ballistic missile tests on the Korean peninsula must serve as an example of how the international community should act in the event of a threat to international peace and security. Likewise, the United Nations must pay particular attention to the ongoing dispute involving the People's Republic of China and Taiwan, as it has the real potential to lead to

military confrontation if it is not dealt with effectively and efficiently.

My delegation is on record as drawing the attention of the United Nations membership to these real threats, in particular the military intimidation exerted through the deployment in China of 800 ballistic missiles aimed at Taiwan and through China's enactment of the so-called anti-secession law. The irony of the situation is the fact that there is no effective political mechanism in place to oversee peaceful and preventive measures to resolve this dispute, despite the active involvement of the 23 million people of Taiwan in international cooperation. Surely, the United Nations cannot fail to shoulder its collective responsibility with regard to world peace by ignoring that threat.

We strongly feel that these acts of intimidation against Taiwan not only run counter to provisions of the United Nations Charter, but also contradict international commitments on peace and security, including the leaders' outcome document (resolution 60/1) adopted by this House last year. The United Nations must step in and ensure peaceful dialogue.

We believe that in honouring the leaders' call for collective security and effective prevention, there is clearly a role for the United Nations to proactively promote trust, confidence and peaceful dialogue between the stakeholders. This threat is real for the North-East Asia-Pacific region and for the whole world. We call for urgent preventive action by the United Nations regarding the Taiwan Strait for the sake of all.

Mrs. Kania (Germany): I would like to fully associate Germany with the statement just delivered by the representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union.

As a country with a particular interest in the issue of conflict prevention, Germany warmly welcomes the Secretary-General's recent report on the prevention of armed conflict (A/60/891). The international community continues to face numerous challenges that make conflict prevention more important than ever. A comprehensive approach to conflict prevention is therefore essential. The United Nations needs to play a key role in further developing this issue. States Members of the United Nations reaffirmed their commitment to conflict prevention in last year's World Summit Outcome (resolution 60/1).

Germany agrees with the Secretary-General that in order to prevent armed conflicts, we must understand their origins and must seek to make violence a less reasonable option. That responsibility rests primarily with individual States, which need to strengthen their national capacities to address structural risk factors. National dialogue and consensus-building processes are important in that regard. But States are not alone in this: external support, including from the United Nations, is available in areas such as democracy-building, elections and constitutional capacity-building. Regional organizations also have an important role to play.

Peace, security, development, human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law are closely intertwined. Implementing the Millennium Development Goals will contribute to reducing the overall sources of tension in developing countries that are vulnerable to conflict; so will further developing and implementing a stronger international normative and institutional framework.

In that context, Germany read with interest the Secretary-General's suggestion that a "responsibility to prevent" be developed in parallel to the responsibility to protect, to which world leaders committed themselves in the 2005 outcome document. Like many other Governments, the German Federal Government supported the international conference of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict that took place here in New York in September 2005, bringing together representatives of civil society from more than 110 countries. Civil society has an important role to play in the prevention of armed conflict. We fully support the Secretary-General's call for an intensification of the dialogue with civil society.

The Secretary-General's report has highlighted once again that the issue of conflict prevention remains very important. Together with other Member States, we stand ready to cooperate so that we can further develop a culture of prevention not only within the United Nations system, but in general. In that context, the suggestions put forward by the Secretary-General deserve careful consideration.

Mr. Beck (Solomon Islands): My delegation welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on the prevention of armed conflict (A/60/891), for which we commend him. The report is comprehensive and

informative, as it presents the strengths of the Organization's system as well as its gaps and identifies the responsibilities of States.

As stated in the report, the prevention of armed conflict remains the chief responsibility of the Organization. My delegation's intervention is aimed at contributing to the discussion called for by the Secretary-General to strengthen our resolve in the maintenance of international peace. Solomon Islands would like to make general remarks on the report before discussing selected issues.

With regard to the issue of the causes of conflict, Solomon Islands believes that many of what are identified in the report as systematic root causes of conflict — such as the small-arms trade, weak governance, poor public policies, inadequate health services and so forth — are secondary causes of conflict. The primary cause of conflict is related to development; it is the fact that the world is divided between the haves and the have-nots.

It is the countries that are located on the periphery of the international system, in particular the least developed countries, that are the most vulnerable to security threats. Those countries continue to face challenges in participating fully in a globalized world. Good governance, proper health systems and better education all cost money. My delegation agrees with the argument made in the report that the primary responsibility rests with sovereign States. But States can help themselves only if there is a global concerted effort to create a just and fair economic system. The suspension of the Doha round does additional harm and maintains the structural divide between the North and the South.

Mr. Cabral (Guinea-Bissau), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Solomon Islands welcomes the various international mechanisms that are available to assist countries — especially those emerging from conflict — in particular the Peacebuilding Commission, set up to help countries emerging from conflict not to slip back into conflict. Solomon Islands looks forward to the Commission's recommendations on the issue, as called for by the Secretary-General, and to the utilization of funds, in particular the Democracy Fund, to strengthen governance and bring our political systems closer to our respective peoples.

On the issue of HIV/AIDS, Solomon Islands would like to see the Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria provide for threats both big and small, for all threats start out small. In our case, smallness is a curse, meaning that minimum attention is given, allowing threats to grow in size and scope. We must avoid that and invest in preventing all threats from growing.

Sadly, Pacific regional proposals have not been considered, although submissions were made by our regional intergovernmental organization, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community. My delegation hopes that the responsible authorities could reconsider the proposal in the light of the Secretary-General's report.

My delegation is also concerned at the fact that some threats have not received any attention by our Organization. The increased threat within the East Asian region, in particular with respect to the Taiwan straits, has been brought to the attention of our institution by Member States. Unfortunately, there is, as of now, no regional or international mechanism capable of keeping the threat in check.

In that regard, Solomon Islands supports the proposal contained in the report that the General Assembly debate such threats. The goal is not only to assist the various United Nations departments in analysing the levels of the threats posed, but also to put such threats in their proper perspective, allowing the Secretary-General's Office to receive firsthand information and engage Governments and stakeholders in the process, as well as encouraging Member States to live up to their Charter obligations in the area of the maintenance of international peace and security.

Solomon Islands hopes also that the working methods of the Security Council and the proposed enlargement of the Council will be given equal attention, considering that the Council is the principal organ charged with the responsibility of maintaining international peace.

Finally, my delegation would like to close by once again welcoming the report and its contents and by assuring Mr. Eliasson of Solomon Islands' commitment and support in positively contributing towards making the world safer and free from structural threats.

Mr. Chem (Cambodia): I would like to express my sincere appreciation to President Eliasson for having convened this significant plenary meeting to adopt a short procedural draft resolution taking note of the Secretary-General's progress report (A/60/891) on the prevention of armed conflict, so that the report, containing strategic proposals and recommendations of the Secretary-General, can be taken up for lively discussion at the sixty-first session of the General Assembly.

My delegation highly values the painstaking efforts made by the Secretary-General in formulating this significant report, which is the result of broad consultations with United Nations agencies and all actors working on the prevention of armed conflict and which contains a careful analysis of the information collected. Primarily, my delegation finds that the general analysis section — particularly concerning sources of conflict and the enhancement of an infrastructure for peace, among other things — though not comprehensive in nature, gives us better insight into the coordination among, and commitments of, individual Member States to work more effectively for conflict prevention with the relevant country-based United Nations agencies. My delegation also is convinced that genuine national political will and regional cooperation will help us reach our common goals.

Cambodia, as a country which has emerged from a long period of conflict, war and genocide, takes this opportunity to extend its deep gratitude to the international community and to the United Nations for their consistent and generous efforts to put the country back on the path of political stability, security, sustainable development and peace to the country, thus preventing an undesirable relapse into conflict.

My delegation fully favours the adoption of the short procedural draft resolution initiated by the President, and I am quite confident that the draft resolution will secure consensus on the part of all States Members of the United Nations.

My delegation finds the recommendations made in the report of the Secretary-General very useful and will forward them to the capital for study, especially with regard to sections on financial implications. In addition, my delegation believes that those recommendations should be put forward for active

discussion at the forthcoming sixty-first session of the General Assembly.

My delegation concurs with the Secretary-General that there has been a gap between rhetoric and reality. Admittedly, the performance of the United Nations has so far not been satisfactory to Member States in terms of the efforts made to avert the armed conflicts which we have seen in the context of the current developments unfolding in different parts of the world, in which a large number of people, both civilians and military personnel, have been killed.

My delegation is very pleased with this week's compromise, arrived at by Member States in the ad hoc Working Group, concerning the adoption of the report and of the draft resolution on the revitalization of the General Assembly, which will be recommended to the Assembly later on for adoption. The revitalization of the General Assembly will definitely help enhance the effectiveness of the United Nations in discharging its duty to safeguard international peace and security.

Mr. Wali (Nigeria): May I commend Mr. Eliasson for having organized this meeting to discuss the report of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, on the prevention of armed conflict. I wish also warmly to salute the Secretary-General for an excellent report. The report comes at a most auspicious time. It adds to the many personal and tireless efforts made by the Secretary-General to bring peace to troubled parts of the world.

The report shows a clear understanding of what needs to be done at different levels — namely, the national, regional, and international levels — to address challenges in the area of peace and security.

At the national level, we need now more than ever to embrace, in word and in action, the principles of transparency and inclusiveness in governance. Nigeria believes that this would help to promote confidence among populations and the support of the international community. Our goal of eliminating poverty by providing gainful employment to the teeming youth population should remain the sheet anchor of national action. Furthermore, we have to overcome the scourge of pandemic diseases such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis, which constitute a deadly cocktail that threatens the productive sector of the economies of many developing countries, including those of Africa. More importantly, we need to put an

early end to existing armed conflicts for our nations to stabilize and to embark on meaningful development.

The African Union and other subregional organizations, such as the Economic Community of West African States, have taken various initiatives to resolve current conflicts and prevent the outbreak of new ones. There is now permanent engagement by our countries with regard to such conflict situations through the African Union Peace and Security Council and comparable subregional mechanisms. These initiatives and efforts will continue to require the support and understanding of our partners. It is reassuring that the World Summit Outcome document (resolution 60/1) contains far-reaching decisions taken by world leaders on this matter. The need to faithfully implement those decisions cannot be overemphasized, in view of their impact on Africa's growth and development.

I would like to identify some key elements in that connection. Poverty has generally served as the fodder upon which most armed conflicts feed. The international community must show commitment in addressing the yearnings of the developing countries in connection with the issue of trade imbalances and youth unemployment. Various national programmes, such as the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy of the Nigerian Government, deserve continued support. As a home-grown programme, it answers to the peculiar needs and aspirations of the Nigerian people. The support of the international community would therefore create a positive attitude towards not just the national Government but also the United Nations.

HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and other infectious diseases have proved to be a serious threat to the survival of most African economies. Sustained coordinated efforts by national Governments, the United Nations and specialized agencies such as the World Health Organization and UNICEF, as well as civil society, would be invaluable in that regard.

With regard to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, easy access to such weapons is a disincentive to dialogue in conflict situations and now represents a veritable scourge in Africa and most other parts of the developing world. Let us eschew the pursuit of national gains and commercial interests in order to address this major problem. Our past failures in reaching decisions should not discourage us from

rising to the challenges posed by the spread of small arms and light weapons.

As for strengthening the institutions of governance, we should not let slip our commitment to the dispensation of justice, the conduct of free and fair elections and the efficient management of national resources. We believe that such actions would strengthen confidence in governance and reinforce the willingness of the population to defend democratic institutions. But we must, equally, move with vigour to replicate good governance in international bodies.

With regard to the settlement of existing disputes, as the example of Nigeria and Cameroon has amply demonstrated, the resolution of border disputes in an amicable manner can strengthen amity between nations and create an atmosphere conducive to stability and development. We do not underestimate the challenges this entails, but a demonstration of the requisite political will would enable those problems to be overcome.

Let me conclude by referring briefly to the most recent diplomatic shuttle of the Secretary-General in the Middle East. The success of the visit so far attests to the premium that our Organization should put on preventive measures. We commend the Secretary-General for those efforts, which should rekindle the confidence and trust of the peoples of the world in our Organization. That would be made even more evident when we invest, as we should, in this area to make our world a better place.

Mrs. Asmady (Indonesia): My delegation would like to commend the President for having convened this meeting on such a crucial issue. We are hopeful that our discourse today will contribute to furthering our collective efforts to combat the scourge of armed conflict. While the overall trend in the number of armed conflicts worldwide may be downward, global upheavals and uncertainty are on the rise. It is the best of times for some, but it is the worst of times for others. The recent tragedy of Lebanon and the agonizing delay in the Security Council — at great cost to innocent men, women and children — in reaching an agreement for ending the hostilities once more reminds us of the imperative to strengthen the global norms that can bring about a real culture of respect for human life, mutual coexistence and peace.

The Secretary-General speaks for many when he says that there is an unacceptable gap between rhetoric

and reality. In view of the various deadly conflicts in recent history and the increased tensions between different parts of the world, it is critical that we come together and try to engage with each other with mutual respect and equality.

Indonesia believes that multilateralism should be at the heart of all our efforts in the prevention of conflicts at the intra-State level. Mutually beneficial international partnerships can have a significant influence on the peaceful resolution of difficult political and socio-economic problems. The Charter and the principles of international law should be our guides in that regard. Hence, the United Nations — our chief multilateral forum — should be the main forum in which to address this issue. The role of the United Nations needs to be strengthened, including through effective and timely interventions, so as to seek peaceful ways out of confrontational situations.

It is the prime responsibility of national Governments to adopt the strategies and plans that they consider to be most effective in ensuring that peace prevails in their countries. The United Nations and other relevant international entities should support the capacity-building of, in particular, those countries which are vulnerable to conflict.

My delegation broadly welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on the prevention of armed conflict (A/60/891). We are pleased that a third, very important, sphere of action, namely, systemic prevention, has been introduced, after the concepts of structural and operational prevention were taken up in the 2001 report on the same topic (A/55/985). We believe that by focusing on actions at the systemic level, where all critical elements are addressed, the international community can be more effective in both formulating and implementing solutions that bring about lasting peace.

Indeed, concerted systemic measures, such as those to eradicate the illicit trade in small arms, tackle environmental degradation and foster corporate social responsibility, particularly in those industries that have been known to fuel conflict, can help to promote world peace. We regard progress in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals to be paramount in the elimination of the systemic inequities that, for many, have continued to be the major hurdle to their climbing out of poverty. Avenues such as trade based on a fair and equal international trading regime can lead to

sustainable income-generation cycles, thereby improving the socio-economic conditions of the impoverished. The best way to prevent conflict is to take away the negative elements that may act as the incubator for conflict.

The concept of the responsibility to protect should be approached very carefully, taking into account the sovereignty and equality of all States. My delegation opposes the threatening of peoples, groups or countries by others, and sees that as a counterproductive measure. While we realize that sanctions may be required in some exceptional circumstances, we believe that extreme care should be exercised in that regard. We also believe that aid should not be tied to conditionalities. Effective partnerships for development are those that are based on mutual understanding, trust, respect and accountability among all parties.

Indonesia, as a member of the Peacebuilding Commission, would like to work actively with others to try to fill the lacunae in the international peacebuilding system. We need to implement cohesive and integrated peacebuilding strategies that address conflict-related issues in their entirety.

In conclusion, we would like to reaffirm our full support for all those who endeavour to take concrete steps based on international principles of justice, dialogue and cooperation to resolve conflicts in a holistic manner, giving priority to removing the root causes of grievances.

Mr. Sevilla Somoza (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): Permit me at the outset to congratulate the Secretary-General and his collaborators on the drafting of the report on the prevention of armed conflict (A/60/891) before us at this meeting. That document meets a very deeply felt need in today's world, because prevention is one of the main obligations established in the Charter of the United Nations. The main responsibility for prevention rests with national Governments, particularly since it is always preferable to prevent a conflict than to lament its consequences later.

In his report the Secretary-General highlights the normative, political and institutional progress made in this area. Since 2001 — the date of his first report on this subject (A/55/985) — United Nations organs have adopted various resolutions, including Security Council resolution 1625 (2005) on strengthening the

effectiveness of the Council's role in conflict prevention, particularly in Africa. The report also indicates that if we are to prevent conflicts, we must understand their origins and seek to make violence a less acceptable option, and that we must not ignore the underlying injustices or motivations that cause people to take up arms. In addition, it maintains that violence finds followers when people lack alternatives and feel voiceless. That confronts us with the dual challenge of addressing or diminishing the tension that hovers over society and strengthening the institutions that give it the ability to channel conflict into non-violent paths and to open up spaces for dialogue.

The report reminds us of the distinction between structural and operational prevention and introduces systemic prevention, which refers to measures to address the global risk of conflict that transcends specific States. Various paragraphs and chapters concern the role of the United Nations, the Secretary-General and the international community in general in the area of conflict prevention. In various sections, specific examples are highlighted, such as systemic, structural and operational measures to neutralize sources of tension.

Some of the examples cited are in the region of the Americas, including the Inter-American Democratic Charter, adopted by the Organization of American States (OAS), which establishes the basis for peaceful coexistence among democratic member States. Likewise, the report refers to Central American States' firm demonstration of their commitment to the rule of law and conflict prevention by utilizing the International Court of Justice to help resolve conflicts, particularly long-standing conflicts that could destabilize the subregion if they are not peacefully and systematically addressed.

Nicaragua is currently participating in three trials before the International Court of Justice, two of which concern the country's maritime borders. We must recall that the Court has jurisdiction over all issues submitted to it by States regarding prevention-related matters covered by the Charter of the United Nations or by treaties and conventions currently in force.

It is noteworthy that, in the portion dealing with flows of illegal narcotics, our Central American region is also mentioned as one of the areas that will continue to suffer from that evil because of a lack of concerted action at the global, regional and national levels. We

believe that in this regard, the report errs by not highlighting the efforts being made in the inter-American region through OAS agreements and services, including the Inter-American Commission for Drug Abuse and Control, as part of the Secretariat for Central American Economic Integration, and the implementation of the Constitutive Convention of the Permanent Central American Commission for the Eradication of the Illicit Production, Traffic, Consumption and Use of Drugs and Psychotropic Substances. In fact, in 2004 and 2005, in only one country of the subregion — my country, Nicaragua — the national police confiscated 13,500 kilos of cocaine, worth more than \$225 million on the drug market.

Another omission that we have noted in the report is the failure to highlight the role of UNESCO in this area — particularly in the evaluative tables appearing at the end, in which it is mentioned only in the context of the fight against HIV/AIDS. Since the 1990s, UNESCO has sponsored various studies and seminars on this topic with so-called peace promoters in this region. Again, it is worth mentioning the role played by UNESCO in the area of conflict prevention, in accordance with resolution 53/243, Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace.

Before concluding, my delegation wishes to draw attention to the situation in East Asia, where two problems have been causing an increase in tension. One of them is on the Security Council's agenda, but the other is of equal or greater importance, because one of the countries involved possesses nuclear weapons and has hundreds of missiles aimed at another country in the Taiwan Strait. That could lead to a military confrontation of unimaginable proportions. This is not among the issues being considered by this world body. To my delegation, it is very worrisome that neither the United Nations nor the international community has taken preventive measures, which we believe are urgently needed because of the threat involved.

Mr. Ozawa (Japan): I join previous speakers in expressing appreciation to the Secretary-General for his progress report on the prevention of armed conflict (A/60/891). It has been five years since his first such report, in 2001, and three years since the adoption of resolution 57/337.

Our discussions today on the Secretary-General's report are quite timely as we continue to engage in the follow-up to the 2005 World Summit Outcome

(resolution 60/1). We note that the report analyzes structural and operational measures, as well as systemic measures, for conflict prevention. That analysis will no doubt help to deepen our further discussions on this matter and also shed light on future efforts that should be taken by Member States.

We feel that the concept of conflict prevention is now well established. It has been the guiding concept in our discussions on conflict and post-conflict situations and has led us to develop the concepts of peacebuilding and of the consolidation of peace. We feel that our commitment to promote a "culture of prevention", as outlined in the outcome document of the 2005 world summit, was an important accomplishment. At the same time, in order to be successful, we need to pursue practical and concrete measures which take into account the real requirements on the ground. Such measures, needless to say, require careful assessment of the peculiar characteristics of each conflict situation.

The Government of Japan has long advocated the need for a comprehensive approach to preventing conflict by incorporating political, economical, social and humanitarian measures. Japan considers the concept of conflict prevention as an important factor in achieving human security, which has been adopted as a key element of Japan's foreign and official development assistance policies.

An important element of Japan's comprehensive approach is its commitment to the realization of the Millennium Development Goals. At the Asian-African Summit in April 2005, Prime Minister Koizumi pledged to double Japan's official development assistance to Africa over the next three years, and, at the Group of Eight (G-8) Gleneagles summit, held in July 2005, the Prime Minister announced Japan's intention to increase the volume of official development assistance in the next five years by \$10 billion over the 2004 level. Japan has also been providing assistance for the consolidation of peace and nation-building in the former Yugoslavia, Cambodia, Timor-Leste, Afghanistan, Iraq, Sri Lanka and a number of African countries.

The United Nations, as the only truly universal international Organization, plays a crucial role by enacting operational measures to prevent the escalation of conflict. As mentioned in the outcome document, the mediation capacity of the United Nations needs to be

strengthened. The establishment of the Mediation Support Unit will enhance the role of the good offices of the Secretary-General and provide additional support for his mediation efforts.

At the same time, we must recognize the fact that regional organizations are playing increasingly important roles in the field of conflict prevention and mediation. It goes without saying that possible measures for action need to take into account the peculiar characteristics of each country and region. That being the case, the United Nations and the relevant regional organizations should cooperate and act in a complementary manner. A good example of such cooperation is the negotiation of the Darfur Peace Agreement. The African Union (AU), under the leadership of the presidents of the Republic of the Congo and of Nigeria, together with the Chairperson of the AU Commission, Mr. Konaré, played a critically important role in the negotiations. We commend the role played by the African Union.

In other regions, the mediation efforts of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Organization of American States (OAS), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and other regional organizations have also been beneficial and welcome. Those regional efforts, based on a sense of local ownership of the conflict-prevention process, deserve the support of the international community. The Security Council could complement such efforts through the dispatch of Security Council missions, the imposition of sanctions and other measures. For its part, Japan will continue to support such regional efforts through such measures as providing funding to the ECOWAS secretariat for dispatching ECOWAS mediators to Liberia.

It is said that about half of all armed conflicts relapse into violent conflict within five years of a peace agreement. It is clear that we must do more to prevent the recurrence of conflict. The establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission gives us some hope in that regard. We believe that the Peacebuilding Commission will benefit by gaining firsthand knowledge of what is happening on the ground. Such information could be provided by the United Nations field missions, regional organizations, donor communities and non-governmental organizations. That information, together with national plans based on ownership, will form the basis for identifying the

appropriate measures for achieving the sustainable consolidation of peace.

Finally, in view of the importance of this agenda item, my delegation expresses its support for the proposal to include it on the agenda of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. As there has been no substantive discussion of this matter for some time, we hope that our future discussions will be more action-oriented.

Mr. Zinsou (Benin) (*spoke in French*): My delegation is pleased to have this opportunity to give thought together to the progress report of the Secretary-General on this very important question of the prevention of armed conflict. We welcome the commendable efforts to promote dialogue made by the Department for Political Affairs in drafting this report.

At the 2005 world summit, Heads of State and Government urged the United Nations to move from a culture of reaction to a culture of anticipation and prevention of armed conflict. The report of the Secretary-General reflects the progress made in that respect. We are convinced that the culture of prevention is rooted in the United Nations system and that it is becoming a goal in itself as part of the primary objective of the United Nations. The report of the Secretary-General is notable not only because of its comprehensive approach but also, and most importantly, because of the efforts made therein to refine the conceptual tools used for analysis and action in this area.

The report examines preventive action at three levels — systemic, structural and operational — reflecting the latest academic thinking in that respect. The integrated vision set out in the report provides for simultaneous and coherent action that takes into greater account all the dimensions of the contexts surrounding, and the catalysts of, the eruption and prolongation of armed conflicts. The analysis contained in the report also provides for a series of measures conducive to developing synergies aimed at mobilizing capacities in the framework of the common commitment to meet challenges in the area of prevention.

The prevention of armed conflict is now rightly understood as the overriding responsibility of Governments, a responsibility that should be met both individually and collectively in the context of the promotion of more effective democratic and economic governance at the national and international levels. The

initiatives taken in that same spirit to translate into reality the social responsibility of corporations to reduce the threat of armed conflict represent a positive response to the crucial question of the illegal exploitation of natural resources and its well-known consequences, *inter alia*.

My delegation has taken note in particular of the call for States' participation in international regulatory frameworks. International instruments must be seen not as mechanisms that censure or limit the action of Governments, but as instruments of cooperation and solidarity that promote the ideals shared by the United Nations and the Member States. In the same vein, mutual assistance and cooperation networks should be established to facilitate the implementation of those instruments and to promote the dissemination of good practices in this area. Among other things, that will increase the potential for setting up closer links between the Community of Democracies and the movement of new or restored democracies.

The strengthening of mechanisms for the peaceful settlement of disputes has made much progress — especially in Africa — within the context of cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations in the area of international peace and security. We believe that the Secretary-General's proposal to establish a unit Secretariat to centralize the knowledge acquired in the field of preventing armed conflict is an altogether worthy initiative. We hope that this can become operational as soon as possible. We agree with the Secretary-General that it will have a crucial role to play in designing integrated strategies for the prevention of armed conflict, as called for by heads of State or Government of Security Council members when they adopted resolution 1625 (2005) during the summit-level meeting held on 14 September 2005.

Enhancing the effectiveness of the Secretary-General's functions in implementing preventive measures — especially preventive diplomacy — require that steps be taken to increase the Secretariat's capacity for analysis. The Secretary-General should also be able to draw upon a pool of eminent persons of demonstrated moral authority to guide and support his good offices. That will require the mobilization of sufficient human resources for regular follow-up of political developments in various parts of the world that are prone to outbreaks of armed conflict.

Where they exist and are operational, we should capitalize on regional and subregional early warning mechanisms. It is important to establish effective communications in that regard, which will entail strengthening United Nations regional offices. In that context, we should also examine the principle of preventive diplomacy and consider having greater recourse to special political missions. Similarly, it is important to create a more regular mechanism for the work of the United Nations to promote dialogue about the prevention of armed conflict.

We support the principle of making official the Group of Friends on conflict prevention. My delegation believes that making dialogue more official and continuous is a requirement that flows from an awareness of the utility of preventing armed conflict and of the stakes involved. It is a matter of saving human lives. Dialogue should be expanded to include all actors involved in prevention activities within the United Nations system, for that will provide for greater coherence among the various actors working at various levels of engagement and responsibility.

We believe it is crucial to mobilize sufficient financial resources to develop United Nations mechanisms in the area of conflict prevention. My delegation fully supports the proposal to earmark 2 per cent of the peacekeeping budget to the prevention of armed conflict. That proposal should be considered during the budgetary discussions to be held during the sixty-first session.

In that regard, my delegation would like to take this opportunity to draw the international community's attention to the need to increase resources to the Secretary-General's fund to assist developing countries that have taken their disputes to the International Court of Justice with the cost of those proceedings.

My delegation believes that the issue of preventing armed conflict should be kept on the agenda of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly in order that we may further consider the proposals and recommendations of the Secretary-General in the context of the other reports published recently on related matters, such as the report (A/61/204) on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1631 (2005) on cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations in the area of international peace and security and the reports on the New Partnership for Africa's Development.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to pay tribute to the Secretary-General for his tireless efforts to promote the prevention of armed conflict. We also wish to pay tribute to his colleagues at all levels of responsibility, as well as to all the academic experts involved in discussing and acting on this issue, who have worked very hard to prepare and finalize this report.

Mr. Li Junhua (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China would like to thank the Secretary-General for his recent report (A/60/891) on the prevention of armed conflict. Like other Member States, China attaches great importance to the question of the prevention of armed conflict. We very much appreciate the ongoing role of the United Nations in that sphere. Given the comprehensiveness and importance of the report of the Secretary-General, all delegations need more time to study it. China therefore shares the view of the President that the General Assembly should continue to consider this question at its next session.

Regrettably, a small number of countries have raised the question of the Taiwan Strait in their statements. I wonder whether they did so at the instigation of others or out of other designs. The Chinese delegation wishes to reiterate that there is but one China in the world and that Taiwan is an inseparable part of the People's Republic of China. In 1971, during the twenty-sixth session, the General Assembly adopted resolution 2758 (XXVI), which contains clear provisions in this regard. This represents the broad consensus that exists among the overwhelming majority of the countries comprising the international community. I would like to emphasize that the question of Taiwan is entirely a Chinese internal affair that bears no relationship whatever to the prevention of armed conflict.

In their statements, many countries also referred to the Charter of the United Nations and the need to abide by it. One of the basic principles of the Charter is non-interference in the internal affairs of sovereign States. We therefore believe that raising the question of the Taiwan Strait under this agenda item is inappropriate and unjustified. If those countries are truly concerned about this question, I suggest they read carefully document A/61/263, which contains comprehensive information about this matter and about China's position.

The Acting President: I now call on the Observer State of the Holy See.

Archbishop Migliore (Holy See): Allow me to express my appreciation to the Secretary-General for his progress report (A/60/891) on the prevention of armed conflict. Among the many significant issues raised in the report, I would like to highlight the following.

First, the introduction of a third sphere of preventive action, namely, systemic prevention, is commendable. It would allow for the adoption of measures to address causes of conflict that transcend particular States. Clearly, the concept is not new, and many measures to curb the transnational causes of conflict are already in place. But to underscore the fight against transnational crime in the context of the prevention of armed conflict is indeed welcome. For one thing, it reminds us that major responsibility for many ongoing armed conflicts lies with international arms traffickers and unscrupulous weapons traders, and that the illicit arms trade is, more often than not, funded by drug trafficking and the illicit trade in precious materials. In this sense, systemic prevention would mean fighting the root causes of armed conflict and, indeed, of all forms of violence, including terrorism.

Secondly, my delegation wishes to welcome the recognition given by the report to the important role of faith-based organizations, and of religious leaders in particular, as agents of change and peaceful coexistence. The Holy See would like to reaffirm that its institutions throughout the world are constantly engaged at all levels in promoting a culture of peace and understanding, as well as in fostering post-conflict healing and reconciliation.

Furthermore, regarding the use of sanctions in support of preventive diplomacy, my delegation assumes that the international community already possesses a good amount of knowledge on this issue, as sanctions have been employed in a number of recent cases. It would have been desirable for the report to touch on the limits of sanctions for humanitarian reasons and on the need to limit sanctions to specific items, such as arms and certain financial operations. In fact, some cases have shown that the first victims of sanctions are the victims of the violence against which such sanctions are supposedly aimed.

Finally, the report states that in the area of conflict prevention the gap between rhetoric and reality remains unacceptable. Indeed, at present, operational mechanisms and legal instruments effectively to prevent armed conflicts are largely already in place. What seems to be needed is the political will to implement them in a consistent way and in all regions of the world where symptoms of tension surface and threaten local and international peace and security.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take action on draft resolution A/60/L.61.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/60/L.61?

Draft resolution A/60/L.61 was adopted (resolution 60/284).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 12?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 40

The situation in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan

Draft resolution (A/60/L.60/Rev.2)

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of Azerbaijan to introduce draft resolution A/60/L.60/Rev.2.

Mr. Aliyev (Azerbaijan): First of all, allow me to express our delegation's sincere appreciation to the President of the General Assembly and to delegations for their patience and understanding, since consideration of agenda item 40, "The situation in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan", has been twice postponed.

In 1972, this body, by its resolution 2994 (XXVII),

"Reaffirming the responsibility of the international community to take action to preserve and enhance the environment and, in particular, the need for continuous international cooperation to this end" (*first preambular para.*),

designated 5 June as World Environment Day.

This year in Azerbaijan, the commemoration of that important date was overshadowed by alarming news about fires in the occupied territories. Early this June, the first series of massive fires occurred in the eastern part of the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, in particular in the mountainous terrain and plains of the districts of Aghdam and Khojavend. The satellite imagery of those districts obtained by Azerbaijan in mid-June 2006 and presented to the international community fully confirmed the initial observations and estimates. At the time, the size of the fire-affected areas had reached more than 130 square kilometres. Satellite images of the massive fires have been circulated by our delegation as an enclosure with our letter contained in document A/60/911, dated 28 June 2006.

Early in July, the fires spread to other occupied territories: the districts of Fuzuli, Jabrayil and Ter-Ter, an area totalling more than 160 square kilometres. Seriously concerned, the Government of Azerbaijan officially requested the Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to send a fact-finding mission to those territories to assess the damage inflicted upon the environment and prepare a report. The fact-finding mission visited some of those territories from 3 to 5 July and submitted a report, which confirmed the accuracy and credibility of the information provided by Azerbaijan. In its conclusion, the mission stressed the lack of proper firefighting equipment on both sides, an insufficient water supply and — this is of particular importance — the need for international assistance.

Meanwhile, the situation on the ground has been deteriorating severely. Our most recent observations confirm that the fires are continuing to burn and have spread dramatically.

Time is running out. In June, the fires damaged an area greater than 130 square kilometres. By the end of July, more than 300 square kilometres had been damaged, with more than 600 square kilometres damaged by the end of August.

What deeply concerns us is the continuation of the fires and the fact that they have been taking place in territories where the Azerbaijani population will eventually return. These fertile areas, once flourishing and cultivated by Azerbaijani farmers, have been turned into a burned desert in less than two months. Fire has totally destroyed whatever remained of the

plundered villages, farms, schools, fields and orchards, making those territories unsuitable for living in. Severe damage has been inflicted upon the environment of those territories, seriously undermining its fragile ecosystem, including the soil and the flora and fauna. Apart from the immediate and very evident impact, there will be serious long-term negative consequences.

What is urgently needed now are comprehensive measures to suppress the fires, eliminate the impact of the environmental disaster and rehabilitate the fire-affected territories of Azerbaijan. As far as the practical matters of the environmental operation are concerned, Azerbaijan reiterates its preparedness to second its experts in the fields of emergencies and environmental protection to participate actively in this operation and to contribute other resources which might be required for its successful conduct.

With that in mind and following consultations, Azerbaijan once again demonstrated a constructive, flexible and action-oriented approach, drastically revising the original text of draft resolution A/60/L.60 into A/60/L.60/Rev.1, focusing on purely humanitarian and environmental aspects.

Meanwhile, we have received further requests from the co-Chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group to continue working on the draft resolution with a view to achieving a consensus text. Over the past few days, intensive consultations have been conducted, during which enormous efforts were undertaken in order to reach a compromise text and to avoid a vote on the draft resolution.

In that connection, I would like to express our appreciation to the representatives of the co-Chairs of the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, in particular the United States delegation and especially Ambassador Alejandro Wolff, for their willingness and their valuable efforts to help us, the delegations of Azerbaijan and Armenia, to bridge the gaps with regard to the draft and to reach a consensus text. Acting in the spirit of compromise, the delegation of Azerbaijan demonstrated the maximum flexibility in order to accommodate every concern. As a result, an agreed consensual text was issued as draft resolution A/60/L.60/Rev.2. In addition, I cannot fail to mention the efforts of the Armenian delegation.

The draft resolution welcomes the readiness of the parties to cooperate in the environmental operation to be urgently conducted with the assistance of the

international community and considers such an operation to be an important confidence-building measure. Interested in the earliest possible suppression of fires and in rehabilitation of the fire-affected territories, Azerbaijan is ready to cooperate with Armenia on this matter, particularly to create proper conditions for the environmental operation. Such action will make it possible for the operation to become a significant confidence-building measure. All of that will demonstrate the true intentions and good will of both Azerbaijan and Armenia.

In conclusion, I would like to express my confidence that the General Assembly will adopt by consensus the draft resolution contained in document A/60/L.60/Rev.2.

Mr. Wolff (United States of America): The Russian Federation, France and the United States of America, as the co-Chair countries of the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), remain committed to promoting a peaceful, negotiated resolution of the Nagorny Karabakh conflict. In that capacity, we take with great seriousness concerns raised by either side to the conflict regarding threats to the security and stability of the region, as well as any developments that pose new obstacles for the negotiation process.

Accordingly, we have examined closely the information provided by the Government of Azerbaijan regarding fires in the eastern part of the occupied territories of Azerbaijan surrounding Nagorny Karabakh. We also note the report of the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, who, at the request of the Government of Azerbaijan and at the direction of the Chairman-in-Office, has carried out a monitoring mission to the affected areas. We note in particular that fires of both natural and man-made origin are a regular occurrence in the region. The question of whether this year's more extensive fires are a cause for ecological concern requiring international attention to their suppression is one that can be answered only through a technical examination of the situation.

Therefore, the co-Chairs stand ready, together with the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, to lend their immediate assistance to the organization of an OSCE mission, with the support and expertise of the United Nations Environmental Programme.

We commend the spirit of goodwill demonstrated by both Armenia and Azerbaijan, and in particular by their Permanent Representatives, in agreeing to cooperate to address the situation raised through this resolution. We hope that the agreement reached today reflects a new readiness on both sides to engage in further measures to build confidence that will advance the process of negotiations. We will redouble our efforts, through the OSCE's Minsk Group, to promote such activities.

We note that over the past two years the co-Chairs of the Minsk Group have worked intensively with the Foreign Ministers and the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan to identify core principles of an agreement that would lead to a just and lasting settlement. Our nations, reinforced by the voices of the Group of Eight nations at their summit in Saint Petersburg in July, have called on the Presidents of both Armenia and Azerbaijan to now accept these core principles as a basis for resolution of the conflict and to prepare their publics for peace. Today we reiterate that call and restate the readiness of our Governments to lend full support to the achievement and implementation of a peace agreement.

Mr. Martirosyan (Armenia): The draft resolution at hand addresses an issue that we thought had been brought to a close two weeks ago through discussions with the Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Minsk Group co-Chairs and the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office. A decision was taken to send a mission of experts under OSCE auspices to assess the fires. The authorities of Nagorny Karabakh had already accepted that proposal, and Armenia was certainly ready to use its good offices to facilitate such a mission. It was our understanding that Azerbaijan had also agreed.

Given all that, it was surprising to see a draft resolution on this issue circulating at the United Nations, especially since it called for a parallel mission under United Nations auspices. That approach was unacceptable to Armenia. We considered such a step to be an obstacle to continuing negotiations and, since it was clearly intended to pursue other political ends, Armenia opposed the motion. However, as a result of our consultations with the Minsk Group co-Chairs, we have come to an agreement on a text that simply reiterates support for the OSCE mission. In that regard, we would like to welcome the readiness of all the

parties to negotiate in the spirit of compromise under the able and very effective mediation of the Minsk Group co-Chairs.

Nevertheless, although we support the contents of the agreement, we continue to remain opposed to the general idea of this agenda item and to a United Nations resolution under it. That is why Armenia dissociates itself from the consensus on this resolution.

Mr. Kryzhanivskiy (Ukraine): I have the honour to speak today on behalf of the GUAM States: Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

GUAM member States are seriously concerned about the massive fires in the eastern part of the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. The satellite images distributed by the Permanent Mission of Azerbaijan clearly confirm the large scale of the fires. The fires have already inflicted widespread and severe damage on the environment and the biodiversity of the region. In addition to the immediate consequences, that will have a grave long-term impact on the health of the population.

The fact-finding mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) that visited the fire-affected territories confirmed the existence of the fires, the lack of proper firefighting equipment on both sides and the need for international assistance in that regard.

The draft resolution before us puts special emphasis on the humanitarian and ecological urgency of environmental operations to suppress the fires and to overcome their detrimental consequences. It also welcomes the readiness of the parties to cooperate to that end and considers such an operation to be an important confidence-building measure.

Naturally, there is a great need for the assistance, expertise and professional knowledge of the organizations and programmes of the United Nations system, in particular the United Nations Environment Programme.

Therefore the GUAM member States — Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine — consider it a matter of the most urgent priority to conduct an environmental operation and welcome the consensus on the draft resolution.

Mr. Ahmad (Pakistan): Pakistan's position on the agenda item under consideration, expressed

individually and collectively in the context of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, is known. We share the concern over the devastating impact and widespread environmental damage caused by the fires. We therefore sympathize and fully support the central objective of the draft resolution under consideration.

The draft resolution stresses the urgency of conducting an environmental operation to suppress the fires and overcome their detrimental consequences, and in that regard it calls for the provision of all necessary assistance and expertise by the United Nations system.

The readiness of the parties to cooperate to that end, as has been welcomed by the draft resolution, is indeed encouraging and necessary to urgently address the situation. We hope that this spirit of cooperation will be sustained.

The consensus adoption of this draft resolution is therefore an appropriate course of action.

Mr. İkin (Turkey): My Government supports a just and lasting solution to the Nagorno Karabakh conflict on the basis of the fundamental principles of international law, the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, the relevant Security Council resolutions and good-neighbourly relations.

Furthermore, I would like to emphasize that Turkey, like all interested parties, supports the efforts of the Minsk Group within the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) aiming at a peaceful resolution of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. We are convinced that a solution to this conflict, which stands as the most important obstacle to the attainment of lasting stability and regional cooperation in the southern Caucasus, will contribute to the peace, stability and welfare of the whole of this Eurasian region.

We believe that, to overcome the effects of the devastating fires that occurred in the eastern part of the occupied territories of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the parties involved urgently need the assistance and expertise of the international community, in particular that of the United Nations Environment Programme and the OSCE. We believe also that cooperation between the parties is essential to extinguish the widespread fires and to rehabilitate the affected region. We know that Azerbaijan is ready to launch this joint effort. We sincerely hope that this joint endeavour will constitute an important confidence-building measure

and will add momentum to the political process led by the OSCE co-Chairman. We therefore welcome the draft resolution.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/60/L.60/Rev.2.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/60/L.60/Rev.2?

Draft resolution A/60/L.60/Rev.2 was adopted (resolution 60/285).

The Acting President: I call on the representative of Azerbaijan, who wishes to make a statement.

Mr. Aliyev (Azerbaijan): I apologize for having requested the floor a second time.

At the outset, I should like to express our appreciation to delegations for their support. However, it is more than astonishing — given the positive results achieved, and at a time when it seems that both the Azerbaijani and Armenian delegations, as a result of the very important efforts made here in New York and in the respective capitals, have, for the first time in United Nations history, finally come up with an agreed text — that the delegation of Armenia has disassociated itself from the consensus.

The delegation of Armenia disassociated itself from the consensus despite its agreement on and acceptance of the consensus text, which was negotiated in direct, good-faith, intensive and difficult but ultimately productive consultations over the past 48 hours, with the active participation of the United States. It is, at the very minimum, dishonest and inappropriate.

This resolution offers a unique opportunity to work on establishing real confidence-building measures and trust. It is in Armenia's own interest to follow up on its declared readiness, which has now been welcomed by the General Assembly, to actively participate in this environmental operation and to fulfil all other obligations emanating from the resolution just adopted by consensus by the General Assembly.

Mr. Martirosyan (Armenia): I, too, should like to thank all representatives and countries for their

support of this resolution and for their contribution to this effort.

Armenia has been very consistent in terms of its policies and the steps taken within the United Nations regarding this resolution. Armenia voted against the inclusion of the item on the agenda of the fifty-ninth session. Armenia withdrew from the consensus during the rollover of this agenda item from the fifty-ninth session into the agenda of the sixtieth session.

I want to emphasize once again that, despite the fact that we support the content of this resolution, we have serious problems with its title, and we remain opposed to the general idea of bringing any Nagorno-Karabakh-related issue to the United Nations.

That is the position of my Government, and that is the reason why Armenia has disassociated itself from the consensus on this resolution.

At the same time, I want to thank my Azerbaijani colleague for his concern regarding the problems of Armenia.

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 40.

Programme of work

The Acting President: I would like to inform members that there will be a plenary meeting tomorrow afternoon, first to take up the report of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the General Assembly, contained in document A/60/999, under agenda item 116, and then to take up agenda items 46 and 120 to consider a draft resolution on the Peacebuilding Fund, contained in document A/60/L.63, and a draft resolution on the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, contained in document A/60/L.62.

Thereafter, the Assembly will take up the report of the Special Political and Decolonization (Fourth) Committee on item 32 concerning peacekeeping operations in all their aspects, contained in document A/60/478/Add.2.

The meeting rose at 6:15 p.m.